Claims

1. A method of allocating a protocol address to a device connected to a packet-based communication network, comprising:

placing on the network an interrogation in the form of a first control frame from a proxy;

receiving at the proxy a response in the form of a second control frame which defines an invalid protocol address for said device; and

sending from the proxy to said device a third control frame which includes a protocol address allocated to said device.

2. A method according to claim 1 and further comprising:

in response to the reception of said second control frame by said proxy, operating said proxy to test potential protocol addresses for conflict with existing protocol addresses, and obtaining said protocol address when conflict thereof with existing addresses is absent.

3. A method according to claim 2 and further comprising operating said proxy to obtain a protocol address for said device by any one of steps (a) to (c) as follows:

(a) by means of a request addressed according to a dynamic host communication protocol;

(b) automatic private IP addressing; and

(c) manual entry of the protocol address.

4. A method according to claim 3 wherein said steps (a) to (c) are performed in the order (a), (b) and (c) until the protocol address is obtained.

5. A method of allocating a protocol address to a device connected to a packet-based communication network, comprising:

placing on the network an interrogation in the form of a first control frame from a proxy;

receiving at the proxy a response in the form of a second control frame which defines an invalid protocol address for said device; and

in response to the reception of said second control frame by said proxy, operating said proxy to test potential protocol addresses for conflict with existing protocol addresses;

obtaining a protocol address when conflict thereof with existing addresses is absent; and

sending from the proxy to said device a third control frame which includes a protocol address allocated to said device.

6. A method according to claim 5 and further comprising operating said proxy to obtain said protocol address for said device by the steps of:

(a) addressing a request according to a dynamic host communication protocol;

(b) in the absence of obtaining said protocol address by step (a), automatic private IP addressing; and

(c) in the absence of obtaining said protocol address by steps (a) and (b), manual entry of the protocol address.